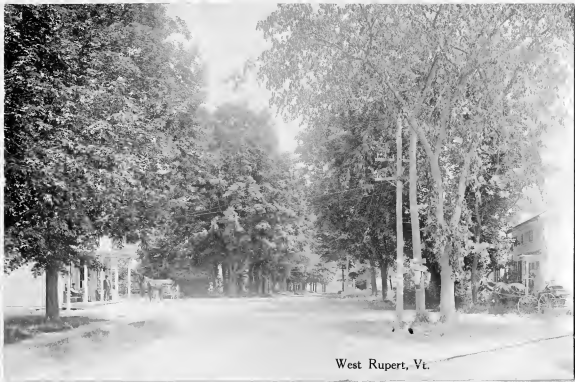


Early Memories



West Rupert, Vt.


Early Memories

of

West Rupert, Vt.

By S. S. Sherman

1423 No State St Chicago Ill.



BARNARD & MILLER PRINT
CHICAGO

Foreword

Dear Brother:

You ask for some of my early memories of West Rupert.

My memory goes back twelve years further than yours; but the latter is bright and retentive, besides, you have lived all your life in or near the home of our early years and will be able to correct many lapses of the former and perhaps awaken its dormant energies to other activities.

NOTE

Some of these "Early Memories" appeared in The
Salem (N. Y.) Press of March 22nd 1912.

The Author.

Early Memories

The township of Rupert occupies the north-west corner of Bennington County, Vermont. It was incorporated by Royal Authority, August 20th, 1761, in the reign of George 3rd, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland;

"By Benning Wentworth, Esq., Our Governor and Commander in Chief of Our Said Province of New Hampshire in New England." Hibbard's History of Rupert.

The township was probably named for Prince Rupert of England, nephew of the unfortunate Charles 1st, a conspicuous officer in the armies of the Civil Wars of that period, a member of The Royal Society, the reputed inventor of Mezzotint painting and an expert in other art inventions.

The township is six miles square and contains twenty-three thousand and forty acres. It is divided into two unequal parts, called East Rupert and West Rupert, by a mountain running north and south. East Rupert is the smaller, but is thought to have been first inhabited. The western part of this township is a charming valley familiarly known as West Rupert. At the head of this valley and near the base of the mountain, dividing this township, is the village

Early Memories

of Rupert Centre. On the north side of the main street was the residence of Dr. Josiah Graves, an eminent physician and also that of his son-in-law, Hon. Nathan Burton, the Indian River road trending northward, the residence of Dr. Henry Sheldon, a store and the Congregational Church and a near-by grave yard. On the south side of the street was the Elwell Hotel, the residence of Judge David Sheldon and other prominent citizens whose names I do not recall, also a cider-mill and a distillery. Near the village, on the west, is a hill of considerable size. Formerly the road to West Rupert village passed directly over its summit, now I am informed it goes half way around the hill near its base.

The beauty and usefulness of this lovely valley are largely increased by White Creek, a bright, transparent stream fed by purest of mountain springs and coming from the south-east. It lies nearly east and west and debouches into Salem, Washington County, New York.

A lady friend recently sent me two photos of the main street in West Rupert. To one more familiar with the present scenery of this beautiful valley these pictures may present many objects

Early Memories

of interest; but the only one that arrests my attention is the ancient and stately elm tree that adorns the roadside near the line that divides Vermont from New York. The Wilson family, who lived near-by, kept a tame bear to which they often gave a breath of fresh air by fastening him to this venerable tree; both were objects of much interest to older people, as well as the young.

On this line, in my boyhood, was a toll-gate and a small house in which the family lived who kept the gate. The road was then called the "turnpike."

For many years New York claimed this entire valley and much adjacent territory, for her enterprising and thrifty farmers took possession of these fertile lands in early Colonial times.

Fifteen of the earliest years of my life were passed in this neighborhood. The scenery and doings of this period are distinctly impressed on memory's tablet.

The Province of New Hampshire was supposed to extend as far west as Lake Champlain.

A similar grant was made to the Royal Province of New York which claimed all the

Early Memories

territory between the Connecticut River and Lake Champlain. The two grants, therefore, covered much of the same area and that district became known as "the disputed territory." Each grant sold many tracts of land for settlement, some of which often fell in the disputed territory. In this way it frequently happened that two parties paid for the same tract of land. Hence disputes and often severe quarrels arose between the claimants. But the Green Mountain Boys, as the New Hampshire men were called, were bold and aggressive; they often mustered in considerable numbers armed with muskets and clubs and drove the New York claimants from the disputed possessions and burned their premises.

Quarrels of this nature were increasing rapidly in number and magnitude when the capture of Ticonderoga by Ethan Allen and eighty-three Green Mountain Boys in the name of the "Great Jehovah and Continental Congress," the battle of Bunker Hill and the second session of congress overshadowed and hushed these local quarrels and united all true patriots in the coming and greater struggle for freedom from British rule.

Early Memories

All questions of boundaries were definitely settled when the Green Mountain State was admitted to the Union in 1791.

Our grandfather, Enoch Sherman, served in the war of Independence under La Fayette. Soon after peace was declared, he married Catherine Seeley, the daughter of a captain of minute men who fell in the battle of Bridgeport, Conn., April 27th, 1777. They possessed willing hands and strong hearts, and anticipating the advice of Horace Greely to young men, "Go west and grow up with the country," they secured a fertile tract of land in the rugged town of Sandgate, Bennington County, Vermont. They prospered financially and in time had four sons and two daughters rapidly approaching maturity. Our grandfather, who possessed an enquiring as well as an acquiring turn of mind, at length found his way northward to White Creek Meadows, as the central part of West Rupert was then called. He was so well pleased with the fertile valley, its bright skies and clear stream of pure water, that he purchased a considerable tract of land lying on both sides of the main branch of White Creek. He soon moved his family, except

Early Memories

one son who remained on the old homestead, to a large gambrel-roof residence on main street a few rods east of the bridge across this favorite creek and became a large and enterprising farmer. In my early memories, I recollect him as an aged and venerable patriarch with four sons and two daughters, whose families, with one exception, were comfortably settled in commodious homes not far from the patriarchal manse.

Seeley, the oldest son, occupied a good farm in the town of Salem, a mile or so distant. Morehouse, Seeley's oldest son, became a mechanic; he lived a while in Lowell, Mass., Troy, N. Y., and finally moved to Iowa where he died in 1897. Enoch, the second son, was for some years a successful teacher, then acquiring the homestead, in which he was born, he became a prosperous farmer. Gen. M. H. Sherman, a prominent and wealthy citizen of Los Angeles, Calif., is the son of Enoch and grandson of Seeley. Lucy, a daughter of Enoch and sister of Gen. M. H. Sherman, is the wife of E. P. Clark, also a wealthy and prominent citizen of Los Angeles. I have before me a letter of Gen. M. H. Sherman written on board the majestic steam-

Early Memories

ship Olympic, saying he has in charge a daughter, a niece and a nephew to whom he is giving the pleasure of an ocean voyage, a generous survey of European and Asiatic countries and a rapid but genial tour around the world. Seeley had a daughter about my own age called Betsey; she married a Baptist minister by the name of Zebulon Jones, a graduate of Middlebury College. There were two other daughters, Thankful and Catherine, also three other sons named Josiah, Squire and Adolphus.

Evi, the second son of grandfather, who remained on the Sandgate farm, was prosperous financially and became the father of a large family.

Sterling, the third son, was our father. A brief record of his activities will form the real life story of a successful New England farmer from seventy-five to one hundred years ago. Our father's house was situated on the north side of Main Street, a short distance from the state line. It was a plain frame structure of good size, nearly square, two stories and a roomy garret in height, with an extension on the north-west corner, giving it the shape of an L. The house

Early Memories

had been painted white, but had become a dull leaden color from age, and our father had it painted a brilliant red. In front of it were four tall Lombardy poplar trees and a square yard, in each corner of which, next the street, was an aromatic, handsome Balm of Gilead tree. From the front door to the gate was a gravel walk, on each side of which were cultivated various old-fashioned flowers, of which memory recalls the purple lilac, red rose, variegated poppy, tall holly-hock and the broad-faced sunflower. Our father and his neighbors ornamented the street with a row of bright-leaved sugar-maple trees on each side, the planting of which is among my earliest recollections. I believe the taste for maple sugar has extracted the life-blood from many of these trees, some of which long ago exhibited signs of premature decay.

Across the street, and nearly opposite the house, was a large building containing stables for the horses, a broad and deep bay for their hay and a room for storing wagons, sleighs and farm implements when not in use.

Near-by was also a cider-mill in which our father manufactured cider from his own apples

Early Memories

and those of his neighbors, taking his pay in a portion of the product. In it was ample room for the storing of apples, grinding them by horse power and expressing the juice from the pomace. In the fall his own cellar was well filled with hogsheads and barrels of cider. As the cider procured in this way exceeded the demands of the family, the excess was taken to a distillery in Rupert Centre and converted into cider brandy. In our father's cellar both cider and brandy were always on tap, yet no member of the family, which consisted, besides father and mother, of seven sons, three daughters and both male and female help, ever became intoxicated, to my knowledge.

All these buildings were amply supplied with excellent water from a spring nearly half a mile away, high up on the face of the adjoining hill on the south. The water was brought in a pipe of spruce logs, bored lengthwise, securely fastened end to end and deeply buried in the ground. In time, these logs became defective and our father substituted for them a pipe of lead, which may, for aught I know, be still in use.

Near the state line, on the New York side

Early Memories

and across White Creek, was constructed a dam, impounding at certain seasons water in sufficient quantity and depth to turn the wheel of a saw mill that manufactured all the lumber required by the neighborhood. Our father and the Wilson family managed and, I think, owned this mill. No trace of it now remains. When John, the oldest of the Wilson brothers, was about to leave home and seek his fortune in a distant part of the country, our father gave him a farewell ball, which brought together all the neighbors who joined heartily in giving him a cheerful send-off.

At a point higher up on White Creek and across the road to Hebron, our grandfather Luke Noble is said to have had a grist-mill; this must have been at an early day, for I do not remember seeing the building, though traces of the dam were long visible. At the central point in West Rupert the Hopkins brothers had a small factory of domestic supplies, whose power was furnished by a great overshot wheel, the water of which came by a small canal from a high point in the main branch of White Creek.

On the west of the house was a very old apple orchard, extending from the road on the south

Early Memories

to White Creek on the north and covering several acres. Some of the trees, even then, bore the marks of great age, but they generally yielded excellent fruit. I remember its pound sweets, russets and gilliflowers.

Directly in the rear of the house, on the north, were the shed and yard for wood and a small structure of stone in which ashes were stored and which also served as a smoke-house for the hams and bacon of the family.

East of the house and facing the street was a large kitchen garden which afforded much food for the family, and beyond this the barns and yards for the cows and other animals. This garden contained many hives of bees; the extracting the honey and swarming of the bees afforded us children much amusement. A row of red currant bushes and many trees of deep blue damson plums surrounded the garden. Our father took a quantity of these plums to Troy and sold them for so good a price that his neighbors were well pleased with his venture and followed his example, thus establishing a new industry. I wonder if they still have the luscious damson plum in Rupert; I have never seen their equal since or elsewhere.

Early Memories

Catherine, our grandfather's oldest daughter, married a physician named Jacob K. Drew. They were settled in a nice but small farm on the road to Sandgate, near Col. Jos. Parker's. Across the road, between the house and creek, there was a large young orchard. Darwin was their oldest son. Charles W., the second son, was a general in the Civil War, and settled in Chicago. We became warm personal friends until his death a few years ago. His widow and married daughter are still friends of my family. I had a pleasant visit from them a short time ago. Charles, son of Darwin, married Fannie Sherman, our brother Austin's oldest daughter; she died a few years ago, but her husband's interest in the family continues undiminished. Dr. Drew soon became dissatisfied with his small farm and the limited medical practice of so healthy a locality and sought a permanent home further west in Meridian, N. Y., where he secured a larger farm and was more successful in his profession. Our father cultivated for a time the farm the Doctor left. I recollect that, when a field of wheat was to be harvested, I was given a sickle and sent with the men. During the morning father

Early Memories

appeared with a cradle which performed the work of many sickles. The cradle was the first seen in that vicinity and created much interest. For a long time I had a reminder of the occasion in an ugly scar upon the little finger of my left hand made by this sickle, the first and last I ever used.

Jemima, the second daughter, married Nathan Wilson, one of father's nearest neighbors. They had one son and four daughters. The son enlisted at an early day in the Union Army and his grave was the first that was filled in the circle that surrounds the monument erected in honor of the heroes of the war, in the cemetery at Salem, N. Y. Sarah, their oldest daughter, was a faithful teacher in Texas. She married and is buried there. The second daughter married her cousin John, son of our uncle Isaac Sherman. The other two daughters were successful teachers and I believe are still living.

Isaac, grandfather's youngest son, was liberally educated. He entered Middlebury College, but graduated at Union College, in 1820. He also studied law, but its practice was not congenial and he devoted his attention mainly to agriculture. He married a daughter of Judge Josiah

Early Memories

Rising, his father's nearest neighbor. There was built for him, between the two homes, a fine two-story house, but uncle Isaac soon tired of living under the protecting wings of both father and father-in-law, sold his beautiful house and purchased a large estate in the town of Salem, where his agricultural instincts were amply gratified; he had three sons named Josiah, John and Albert, of whose history I have no further knowledge. His handsome two story frame house was subsequently purchased by Thomas Sheldon, who married into the McClarey family, our father's nearest neighbor. He moved the house from its original site to that of the McClarey homestead, where it still does good service and is the home of the mother of Mark Sheldon, his brother and sisters. The removal of this house was an occasion of much interest. All the neighbors, far and near, with their teams contributed their services.

Grandfather, feeling the weight of approaching years, and weary with the management of his estate alone, called to his aid his grandson, Wright, son of Evi, who was his faithful co-laborer, until twenty-one years of age, when he was given

Early Memories

a horse, saddle, bridle and one hundred dollars in cash and allowed to seek his fortune elsewhere.

Our brother Austin succeeded to the vacancy thus created. His broad shoulders and level head secured grandfather's entire confidence. He managed the affairs of the estate wisely until the patriarch died in 1849. Meantime, Austin had married Laura, daughter of Judge Nathan Burton of Rupert Centre, whose skillful hands and loving heart brought to his side important aid. He then built a new house, with modern improvements, on the foundations made vacant by the removal of uncle Isaac's first house, and converted the ancestral manse into excellent kindling wood. He declined the honor of Judge Advocate and other public offices, and devoted himself exclusively to personal and neighborly affairs. I remember visiting Austin in his new home where grandmother was tenderly cared for. In person she was active, and in mind very bright when ninety-four years old. She soon passed on to that higher, better world where age bears no burden, and life is a ceaseless joy.

I remember well the school I first attended. The school house was on the east corner of the

Early Memories

street leading to Sandgate, which subsequently became the site of Safford's store. The only incident of this school that remains in my memory is the following: I was but a small boy and occupied a front seat with my feet on the floor, near me sat a girl of my own age, or younger; we noticed a pin on the floor and both attempted to pick it up at the same time, the teacher, standing by, observed our efforts and placed her foot upon our fingers, thus pinning us to the floor for a short time. I believe this is about all I remember of my earliest school days.

Across the road on the north, and nearly opposite the school house, was the residence of a prominent citizen whose name I can not recall. One morning he went on horseback to Rupert Centre; having finished his business, toward evening he started home alone. Soon after, some neighbors, coming that way, found his dead body by the roadside. It was thought that he became suddenly very ill and fearing that he might fall from his horse, dismounted and laid down and died, still holding the bridle in his hand. The incident created much interest in the small village and the funeral was largely attended.

Early Memories

The brick blacksmith shop, on the south-west corner of the road to Sandgate, which served the village all the purposes of a smithery and was also a convenient place for the gossip of idlers on rainy days, has been replaced by a handsome stone church. Hotel Houghton has not been replaced because the population of the town has diminished so much that such a public resort is no longer required. The homes of Rufus and Amos Hopkins have changed but little in fifty years or more, and their tall overshot water wheel is still on duty.

I remember well Dwella and George, sons of Amos Hopkins. Dwella was a little older than myself and George was younger. My wife, upon reading the history of Watertown, a book of genealogies published by her uncle, Dr. Bond, of Philadelphia, came across this passage, "Pheseria Ann Sterns married Levi Dwella Hopkins of West Rupert, Vt." This lady was a relative of my wife. The sudden discovery of this distant and unexpected relationship made the two ladies cordial friends, both of whom have long since passed the dark river. George Hopkins held several public offices, he was United States

Early Memories

marshal during the Civil War and Town Representative twice.

Not far south of the blacksmith shop, on the west side of the road to Sandgate, was the two story frame structure of the Baptist denomination with large square pews below stairs and above. My parents worshiped in this building and I well recollect a popular preacher by the name of Reynolds, also his son Worden, for whose conduct and abilities I had a high respect and for whom I anticipated a bright future. The parishioner who attracted most attention was a plainly clad, angular maiden, of more than medium stature, who always came afoot and alone and occupied one of the large pews in the gallery; she was an attentive and an apparently interested listener. Her name was Margaret Thompson, the sister of David Thompson, who occupied the last farm in a small adjacent valley called Perkins Hollow. One inclement winter's Sabbath, as she returned from church past our house, father invited her to stop for dinner. The invitation was promptly accepted and we boys watched the strange woman with great interest as she laid aside her wraps and took the proffered chair. At table her man-

Early Memories

ners were quiet and proper. After dinner she cordially thanked her entertainers, resumed her wraps and took her homeward way across the snow-covered, pathless hillside. Margaret lived under the same roof with her brother's family, but had her separate apartments in which she did her own cooking and was maid-of-all-work. She had a horse and a cow or two, planted, cultivated and garnered her own crops. To a neighbor, offering to mow her small meadow, she replied that she preferred to cut the grass, as she needed it, with her own sickle. She lived in this solitary independent manner for many years and then suddenly disappeared. The family examined her apartments, to no purpose, neighbors joined in the search, but in vain, for her body could not be found. A dark shadow sometimes rests upon the remnants of the stone chimney of the Thompson home, but no weird shade of this eccentric maiden ever frequents the gentle hillside or thinly wooded summits that everywhere invest the quiet valley of West Rupert.

In 1836, the religious movement inaugurated by Alexander Campbell, broke into nearly equal parts the Baptist church, which was founded in

Early Memories

1803, and had prospered until that time. The followers of Campbell increased rapidly in number, built a new house of worship and organized a new society under the attractive title, Disciples of Christ. This is at the present time the largest religious association in West Rupert.

Near the Baptist church was a new brick school house that took the place of the old school house on the corner. This was the second school I ever attended. I remember well a teacher by the name of Hobart, a friend, I think, of cousin Enoch Sherman. He called Frank Raymond to the desk for some misdemeanor, the lad refused to obey, the teacher approached and attempted to pull him from the seat, the lad clung to the leg of the desk which was firmly secured to the wall. At this moment the father appeared, how informed of the struggle, I do not know. Frank turned to his father and said, "I will obey you, but old Hobart never." After some talk between the teacher and father, the latter took his son and left the room. Frank had two sisters and two or more brothers in school. One of the latter is supposed to have perished in the Mexican War.

The father, Bernice Raymond, was a good

Early Memories

business man. He removed his family to Manchester where he became the president of a bank and was a prominent and useful citizen.

Our father purchased his farm, paying for it in successive crops of wool at the stipulated price of 28 cents per pound. To meet this obligation, he kept six hundred sheep, more probably than the whole township contains at the present time. Our father wrote to me of this transaction and suggested that perhaps I had better come home and help pay for the purchase. In my reply I said that he had permitted me to choose between the farm and college and that I hoped he would never have cause to regret my choice.

Here perhaps I may state that our father never refused me a dollar that I asked for, that he cheerfully paid the expenses of my preparatory and collegiate education, and I was not more economical than most students. On my graduation he supplied the means necessary for my journey to Alabama and for my hotel expenses until I could obtain satisfactory employment.

On arriving in Tuscaloosa I was soon elected a tutor in the State University when I commenced a career of twenty-one years of patient, earnest teaching in the warm and sunny south.

VT Coll Locked

F

ST

R85-

S45-

1912